

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5651

As of February 7, 2001

Title: An act relating to creating the citizen councilor network.

Brief Description: Creating the citizen councilor network.

Sponsors: Senators Jacobsen, McDonald, Haugen, Horn, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen, McAuliffe, Winsley, Costa and Thibaudeau.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State & Local Government: 2/12/01.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Staff: Eugene Green (786-7405)

Background: Some citizens feel a need for the establishment of a process to help enhance their understanding of public issues.

Summary of Bill: To increase public participation in the political process, the Legislature intends to establish and support a self-funding pilot process in cooperation with the State Auditor by which citizens can receive information about public issues and provide feedback to elected officials in a convenient, timely manner and local setting.

The Office of Citizen Councilor is created. Any citizen registered to vote, or who lives in Washington, who volunteers to act as an official government advisor may become a citizen councilor by contacting the State Auditor and subscribing to a nominal fee as set by the State Auditor. Citizen councilors must act collectively as official advisors or a sounding board for public officials and agencies. Conveners of citizen councilor groups are designated by the citizen councilor coordinator or deputy by the State Auditor.

The State Auditor must determine suggested issues for public discussion approximately quarterly. An advisory steering committee is created to help the State Auditor determine and assign issues to the volunteer citizen councilor coordinator for implementation by value reporters. After an orientation meeting, the Governor, Legislature, and State Auditor rotate issue determination. A process is established to determine public information materials for distribution to citizen councilors and the citizen councilor network. Value reporters assigned to gather information and issues must be as even handed as possible.

The offices of citizen councilor coordinator and deputy citizen councilor coordinator are created within the Office of State Auditor and are appointed by the State Auditor with the advice of the steering committee. They serve without compensation, but are reimbursed for expenses. Some of their duties are to: (1) promote the citizen councilor program; (2) oversee preparation and dissemination of information; (3) hire a value reporter; (4) solicit

volunteers; and (5) solicit individual councilor citizen councilors to participate in local groups.

The citizen councilor coordinator actively encourages citizen councilor groups to form throughout the state. The groups should consist of eight to ten people. Each citizen councilor must be asked to make donations to cover costs.

A citizen councilor revolving fund is created within the State Treasury. The State Auditor may provide the citizen councilor coordinator with space in existing offices and with clerical services. In the event the program does not support itself and terminates, any funds remaining must be deposited in the general fund.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.